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Patterns, Determinants and Consequences of Migration among Ebira Women in Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory

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Abstract

Migration and its consequences have attracted global attention. Studies have focused on this aspect of migration with less focus on the patterns and determinants, this study therefore, examined the pattern, determinants and consequences of migration among Ebira women in Abuja who are mostly independent migrants. Hinged on the Giddens's Structuration and Harris-Todaro theories of migration, the study specifically described the patterns, identified motivating factors, and examined effects of migration. The study was descriptive in design and utilized multistage sampling procedure which included cluster, convenience and purposive selection of 630 respondents at different stages. Qualitative data was elicited through (four (4) FGD sessions) Data was analyzed using the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) and presented using frequencies and percentages, while qualitative data were thematically analyzed. More than half (53.2%) of the respondents migrated from the rural areas; while some (46.8%) migrated in stages from rural to rural or urban areas before moving to Abuja. The major determinant of migration was economic reported by (56.2%). Migration had positive effects on some migrants as almost half (48.9%) of the respondents were unemployed before migration while only few (17.8%) became unemployed a year after migration. The likelihood of migrating independently, significantly increased by employment status (53.2%).and educational qualifications for some (9.62%). Non-economic factors such as hope of getting married and to seek solace from a broken relationship also motivated migration. A more enabling environment social-economic environment should be created in Abuja to enable migrants realize their economic aspirations.

Keywords: Ebira female migrants, independent migration, migration determinants, rural-urban migration

Introduction

Population movement has captured the interest of researchers from different parts of the globe over a long time in search of greener pastures. Migration is a major component of population change and development and has been a normal occurrence since the beginning of human development (Udo, 2017). In hunting and gathering societies, it was mostly in search of food and security (Brumer, 2008). Gradually, the motive for migration changed from search for food and security to search for and better employment opportunities. Today, migration has taken a diversity of forms involving various categories of people who are distinctively motivated to migrate. In fact, migration is common in all parts of the world, and it involves the young, the old, males and females. Also, migration has different outcomes for the various categories of people involved. Migration typology includes: rural-rural, rural-urban, urban-urban, urban-rural, and international migration. Among all these types of migration, rural-urban migration is the most common in Nigeria (Adepoju, 2000).

A greater percentage of 48.04% in 2020, according to the World Bank collection of development indicators, compiled from officially recognised sources lives in the rural areas in Nigeria. Most rural areas in Nigeria don't have access to social amenities and rural dwellers live in abject poverty; as a result, many migrate to the urban areas to take advantage of urban infrastructures and employment opportunities that are lacking in the rural areas. The Nigerian Migration and Urbanization Survey (2013) shows that more people migrate within the country than those who migrate outside the country; this excess of internal over international migration could be explained by large size and diversity of Nigeria and the economic opportunities available in different parts of the country.

There are political, economic, social, and gender aspects of migration. Among all these aspects, gender has not been adequately studied by migration scholars (Kymzer, 2009). Female migration cuts across all cultures, societies and geographical locations. The volume of female migration differs based on the prevailing cultural and economic conditions in a country (Ndaye, 2009).

In every society, gender has overwhelming influence on the life of individuals. It determines the options available to individuals in the society, including their migration propensity. Research has shown that all aspects of the migration process are influenced by gender and gender stratification (INSTRAW, 2007). Gender is also an important factor in determining the type of migration available to an individual.

Over the years, migration has undergone some changes, an important one being the increasing number of female migrants (Kymzer, 2009). One major changing trend in migration is the entry of women into migration streams that had been primarily male dominated. Increasing number of females migrate on their own capacity as autonomous female migrants moving independently to pursue their economic desires and aspirations, rather than to join a husband, family members or relations, as was the case previously (Ndaye, 2009). In other words, female migration which was hitherto seen as associational has

changed to a situation where females, like their male counterparts, are motivated to migrate on their own volition .

The second major change in female migration among the Ebira is with respect to the pattern or direction of movement. Migration in the area, which dates back to the precolonial period, has been a source of livelihood for Ebira women (Sanni, 2005), and the main reason for migrating was agricultural. Women moved to other areas within the region due to scarcity of farm land or fertile farm-lands. In other words, Ebira women were mostly involved in rural-rural migration for agricultural purposes. With the changing trend in migration, rural-rural migration is no longer the most common type of migration among women in the area as increasing number of them have acquired higher educational qualifications .

Given the visibly rapid increase in the number of Ebira female migrants, this paper examines the patterns, determinants and consequences of Ebira women migration to Abuja.

Empirical Review

Characteristics and Migration Patterns of Migrants

Personal differences have been found to account for differences in the motivation to migrate or not. These are the features that largely differentiate a person from other. Individual characteristics such as age, educational qualification, occupation, marital status, religion and economic status have been documented to be associated with female migration (Lim, 1993). These socio-demographic and economic factors influence people's dispositions to migrate or not and/or where and when to migrate. Firstly, age is a factor of prime importance in the migration decision-making process.

In Nigeria, Mberu (2005), using the nationally representative 1993 migration and urbanization survey, has shown the importance of age in rural-urban migration. The study revealed that rural-urban migrants are particularly concentrated in the 30-44 and 45-59 age group, while rural non-migrants are more likely than migrants to be young (15-29) or old (60+). Khoo (1984), in a study of women in Malaysian cities, concluded that age is associated with female migration.

Secondly, educational qualification is a socio-demographic factor that has over whelming influence on migration. Many explored the relationship between educational qualification and migration report similar results and conclude that educational qualification increases the possibility of migration. That is, higher educational attainment is significantly associated with migration in general and rural-urban migration in particular as education equips people with the requisite skills needed to work in urban areas. Education influences the form of internal person will consider as people with higher educational qualification rural-urban migration, unlike rural-rural migration where the opposite obtains. Otite (1979) in a study of rural-rural migrants in Ondo State of Nigeria concluded that migrants with low education are more in this form of internal migration than those with higher education a study by Sudarkasa

(1977) has shown that education has increasing effect on migration of young women to urban areas. Young women who have gone to school always go to urban areas in search of employment opportunities.

Marital status also affects return migration and/or urban-rural migration. Women who migrate to join their husbands face return migration if their marriage breaks. That is, they might be forced to return to their origin in the case of break up. In other words, divorce could shorten migration duration among women whose migration motive was to join their husbands (Bijwaard & Doesaal, 2012).

Ekpenyong (1984) in a study of migrant farmers revealed that farmers from a rural origin seem to migrate to other rural areas where they can continue with their familiar trade, that is what they are used to. These are migrants who want to keep doing what they do in a different location where they believe would be more economically benefiting. Apart from rural-rural migration, occupational differences have been found to influence rural-urban migration of migrant women traders, who migrate to urban areas or cities where they believe there would be a boost in their business activities (Hollo, 1991; Ekesionye, & Okolo, 2012).

In Nigeria, the effect of religion seems to be more on forced migration. Many migrants have been forced to relocate and/or return to their area of origin because of religious related crises which occur mostly in the Northern part of the country (Osaghae & Suberu, 2005). This also affects migrants' settlement patterns in the North. Religious identity has pushed migrants in Northern Nigeria to settle along religious and ethnic divide (Gambo & Omirin, 2012), due to recurrent violent religious outbreaks that mostly affect other tribes in the Northern part of Nigeria including the Ebiras.

Factors Motivating Migration

a. Economic Factors

Early migration writers explained that economic factor is the main factor motivating migration. They formulated theories to buttress the idea that the motivation for migration is purely economic. Writing in late nineteenth century to explain migration, Ravenstein (1885) and (1889) formulated what was referred to as-laws of migration which saw migration as being inseparable from development and that the sole driving force is economic. In a similar vein, Lee (1966), using Ravenstein's laws of migration postulated that there is a direct relationship between volume of migration and socioeconomic differences in places. This view is shared by other Neo-classical theories.

At the macro level, migration is explained as a response to differences in geographical location in supply and demand for labour. That is, people are expected to move from low income areas to high income areas and this tends to bring a balance in the spatial-economic differences. On the other hand, at the micro level, migrants are seen as rational individuals and/or actors who decide whether to migrate or not after a cost-benefit evaluation of the expected outcome of the intended move (Harris & Todaro, 1970).

Employment opportunities which exist in urban areas have been a leading factor responsible for increasing rural-urban migration in many countries especially in a developing country like Nigeria (Alanana, 2003; Lee & Roseman, 1999; & Hiller & McCaig, 2007). The perceived existence of employment opportunities in urban areas as compared to rural areas has made the urban areas centres of attraction for intending migrants.

In Nigeria, Shadare and Tunde (2012) in their study of graduate unemployment and its effects have shown that the search for employment opportunities is the main factor responsible for the increasing rural-urban drift among graduates and youths. Similarly, Zohry (2009) has revealed in a study of impact of internal migration in Egypt that migration is a response to unemployment. He found that migration is largely due to lack of employment opportunities in the migrants' areas of origin.

Poverty is a key factor that motivates migrating out of rural areas to urban areas and/or a rural area that is believed to have employment opportunities. The poverty level in rural areas in general and among women in particular helps to aggravate the migration of women out of the rural areas to other areas of perceived economic viability

Adepoju (2004) in a qualitative study of feminization of poverty revealed that above half of rural women live below the nationally defined poverty line, lacking access to basic education, decent nutrition, adequate health and social services. Gender disparity in economic power-sharing is an important contributing factor to the poverty of women especially in rural areas.

b. Non-Economic Factors (Marriage)

Researching about the motivating factors underlying migration has taken a more comprehensive and overarching dimension the non-economic factors. There has been a radical shift in the interpretation for the motivation for migration to show that motivation for migration could not be solely for economic factor. In examining the factors associated with female migration, it is important to fully understand the roles assigned to males and females in a society where migration occurs.

Men and women are influenced by the ideologies, cultural norms and values that determine gender roles. Roles given to males and females in a society vary among cultures based on the prevailing ideologies, norms and values that shape people's behaviour. These have corresponding effect on the mobility of males and females. Female migration differs in traditional societies from an industrial society. Khoo (1984) has shown how cultural values and norms influence the mobility of young women who are allowed to migrate only after child bearing, thus influencing the migration of young women as they are not permitted to migrate.

Effects of Migration on Migrants

Migrant women are affected by migration in various ways. Migration can help raise women and men from the lower or middle socioeconomic class to a

higher socio economic class (ILO, 2004). In Vietnam and Ethiopia, migration provides women with employment opportunities and the ability to better their living standards at home. (ILO, 2004). According to Ramirez, (2002) women have a greater tendency to marry at the place of destination. Barber (2005) in a study of female migrant's migration to Canada showed that migration has good or positive effects on female migrants as many of them got married and were economically empowered after migration.

Problems Facing Female Migrants

The problems facing migrants are numerous and diverse, but female migrants face more complex problems. The vulnerability of female migrants has been documented by some researchers (Data, 2005; Ndaye, 1999). They are exposed to many gender migrants, and as women in particular. According to Quinlin (2005) migrant women face a number of gender-specific problems such as loss of rights to village lands left behind, lower pay in urban employment as well as the need to combine child bearing and work outside the family.

Similarly, Curran (2003) have shown that gender is such a profound social factor that influences the kind of problems female migrants face in their destinations. They conclude that migrant women face diverse barriers both at their place of origin and at destination.

Dike (1982) showed in his study of the Ebira living in Lagos that many urban migrants face inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic hostilities in the urban areas, and to cushion the effects they form community or local government area association. Also, Aikins and Ofori-Atta (2007) have shown an association between migrants' unemployment and educational attainment. In their study, less educated migrants experienced more unemployment than the more educated migrants.

Similarly, Togunde (1999) in a study in Nigeria showed that age is an important factor that influences women's employment. The study shows that older women are more likely to be employed than younger women. Religion, according to the study, is also a factor that influences migrant women 's employment. Christians are more likely to be employed than Moslems. Also, ethnicity influences female migrant employment. The study shows that Ebira and Yoruba women migrants are more likely to be employed than Hausa migrant women. The study shows that greater percentage of women who had worked before they got married are more likely to be employed than women who had never worked before, they got married.

Regassa and Yusufe (2009) have shown that there is a strong association between gender and financial problems faced by migrants. Also, the study shows females are more prone to culture shock than males and have more unemployment problem.

Theoretical Framework

Structuration Theory

This paper hinges on the structuration and Harris Todaro theories of migration. Social theories have been used in the social sciences to enhance the understanding of the nature, formation, organization and functioning of societies. These theories can be grouped into micro (agency) and macro (structure) theories; that is, theories that emphasize more on the individual factors (micro) and those that emphasize more on the societal or structural factors in explaining human actions.

Structuration theory emphasized some key concepts which are germane to the understanding and explanation of migration. The key concepts are Agency, Structure, Duality of structure, Institutions, and Time/Space, and these concepts explain the relationship between structuration theory and migration. These concepts are explained in detail below to bring to the fore the nexus between these concepts which embody structuration theory and migration.

Agency

As used in Giddens' structuration theory (1984), the agency is the individual. The individual plays a vital role in social action and societal change. Structuration theory believes that the agent knows what he/she is doing and the reasons for doing it. In other words, the theory stresses that the agents are knowledgeable, and that their actions to migrate are rational decisions; intentional and purposeful. In taking decision, the agent weighs the risks involved; he does not take rash decisions. He makes his decision after a thorough evaluation of the pros and cons of the decision. The cost-benefit analysis enables individuals to make a decision, and this cost-benefit analysis by the agent is very important to migration decision. These personal characteristics of the individual agents and the needs of the individual are often discussed as the proximate determinants of migration.

Structure

Structure is another important key concept in structuration theory. Structures are the rules that govern society. Structures influence social change in a society. Structuration is the process by which society is changed, and this happens in different ways. One of these ways is migration, which brings about population change and development in the society. The society plays an important role in migration decision. In migration studies, structural determinants of migration refer to the influence of structure on migration decisions. Structural variables such as governmental policies and projects, changing economic and political systems among others could be determining factors in migration decision making. Many migrants have migrated because of government policy of establishing a new industry in a certain area. For example, establishment of educational institutions in certain places.

Duality of Structure

Duality of structure is another important concept in Giddens' structuration theory. According to the theory, dialectical relationship exists between structure and agency; agency and structure interact to bring about change in the society. The interaction between individuals and the society brings about societal change. This close association between agency and structure forms the basis of structuration that integrates both agency and structure in explanation of social issues. The duality of structure is very important to structuration theory. In migration research, the relationship between proximate and structural determinants of migration illustrates the importance of the duality of structure. Both proximate and structural determinants interact to bring about migration. In migration decision-making, both agency and structure are very crucial.

Institutions

Another important factor that influences structuration of social systems is institutions. Giddens in his structuration theory identified four societal institutions: symbolic orders/modes of discourse, political institutions, economic institutions, and laws/modes of sanctions. Every agent makes use of these institutions to bring about social change. Different institutions which are among the institutions identified in structuration theory influence migration. Among these institutions, the network between people outside their homelands and their relatives at the place of destination largely influence migration. Economic motives have been known to be determining factors in migration. Most migratory movements have economic underlining; the desire for better economic opportunities which most people believe exist in the urban areas have been a major motivating factor in rural-urban migration and even other types of migration.

Time/Space Relations

Structuration theory emphasizes the influence of time and space on societal change. Giddens stresses that regions are different and they influence society in different ways. As a result, in migration studies too, places of origin and destination are different. It is important to seek for the different factors in places of origin and destination that influence migration. These differences in places of origin and destination could serve as basis for understanding why people migrate.

From the backdrop of the foregoing analysis of migration using structuration theory, one can say that the theory provides a good foundation for explaining Ebira female and even community/kindred based migrant associations. The Ebira woman (agency) makes a rational choice in deciding whether to migrate or not and where to migrate to. The choice is made after a thorough evaluation of the cost and benefit analysis of migrating.

This clearly explains why despite all the factors motivating migration in the society, some people do not migrate. Furthermore, Ebira migrant associations (institutions) could be a factor motivating migration of the Ebira

women. Whenever they reside outside their homeland, the Ebiras form associations which help to bring together the Ebiras in the area.

Harris-Todaro Theory of Migration

Harris-Todaro theory of migration is an economic model used in economics to explain some of the issues concerning rural-urban migration in less developed countries (Harris and Todaro, 1970).

The theory attempts to provide explanation for rural-urban migration despite urban unemployment. The theory believes that rural-urban migration is based on a rational choice; that is, the migration decision is based on rational choice of the migrant and it is made based on the expected income differential between rural and urban areas. The decision to migrate is a function of the perception of the potential migrant of an expected income in the urban area. The theory argues that rural-urban migration persists because there is inequality between urban and rural income, and it is this wage differential that motivates people to migrate. That is, the greater urban income serves as incentive for people to move into the urban areas. This implies that rural-urban migration in a context of high unemployment can be economically rational if expected income exceeds rural income. The theory also notes that due to the differentials in industrial and agricultural earnings, and the tendency of finding employment in the industrial settings in urban areas spurs the individuals to migrate to urban areas.

Methodology

Research Design

The paper adopted a descriptive design. This provided opportunity of describing the patterns, determinants and consequences of migration among migrant Ebira women in the FCT. To achieve this, both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were utilized. These enabled the researcher to collect rich data on the phenomenon.

The Study Area

The study was conducted in Abuja the Federal Capital Territory. Its area covers 2,824 square miles (7,315 square kms) and an annual rainfall of 1100mm – 1600mm. (Source: MDG Journal on FCT, 2008)

The FCT is made up of six Area councils which include: Abuja Municipal, Abaji, Bwari, Gwagwalada, Kuje and Kwali Area Councils Respectively.

Demographically, the FCT has a population of 3 million, 464 thousand, 123 people according to the Abuja Metro population data of 2021 with a growth rate of 5.67%. The populations of study comprised Ebira female migrant who migrated from Kogi State in to the FCT, Abuja.

Population/Sample Size of the Study

The study population comprised female migrants from the Central senatorial district of Kogi State residing in Abuja. These were essentially migrant women

from the five Local Government Areas of Kogi Central senatorial districts, that Ebira speaking namely: Ajaokuta, Adavi, Okehi, Okene, and Ogori- Magongo that have lived in Abuja for not less than one year as at the time of the study, with an approximate population of the Ebira migrant women in the Six Area Councils of the FCT put at 200,000 people, (Oral Statistics from the Ebira people King in Gwagwalada).

The qualitative data was Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Four FGDs sessions were conducted on the basis of key group identities as follows: rural origin, urban origin, never migrated alone, and migrated in company of husband or relative.

The Sampling Technique procedure

The Ebira female Migrant population in the FCT is unknown; As such, this study approximated in the sample drawn. The Multistage sampling technique was adopted. In the first stage, Cluster sampling was first used to divide the FCT in terms of area councils. Their after, Convenience sampling technique was used to select two Ward from each of the Six Area Councils in the FCT where the Ebira Speaking people are predominant. This gave a total of Twelve Wards. In the third stage, in each of the Twelve wards that were selected, simple random sampling was used to select five census enumeration areas (EAs). This gave a total of 60 EAs. In the last stage, in each of the EAs selected, household screening was done to identify the houses where female Ebira migrants resided; while Purposive sampling technique was then used to select the respondents in a selected household.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) participants were purposively selected from migrants who have lived for more than 1 year in Abuja. The criteria used for selection were whether the migrant migrated from urban or rural area, whether the migrant is single or married, and whether the migrant came on her own or came with a family relative or husband. In total, 60 respondents were selected as participants in the focus group discussion. 5 respondent each from the two wards selected from each of the six Area council of the FCT formed members of the FGD participants.

Instruments of Data Collection

The study used quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. This involved the use of questionnaire for collection of quantitative data and focus group discussions for the collection of qualitative data.

Method of Data Collection

Before data collection, Research Assistants were trained who assisted in data collection. The researcher and other experienced researchers in the area of gender and migration conducted the training. The training helped the Research Assistants to familiarize themselves with the research instrument and objectives of the study before going to the field. This helped the researcher to make sure that they understood all the questions in the questionnaire, so as to

minimize error and enhance the quality of data collected. The training also enabled them acquire skills that helped them to effectively interact with the respondents. They achieved this by learning how to create a conversational atmosphere that breeds trust and openness.

In the first stage of selection of the sampling units, names of all the Wards in each of the Six Area Council were written on a separate sheet of paper and put into a box. Two Wards were conveniently selected from the box for each of the Six Area Councils due to the predominant of Ebira people in those wards. The Wards that were selected for Abaji are: Abaji Central and Abaji North East; Bwari, Bwari Central and Kubwa wards were selected; for Gwagwalada, Zuba and Gwagwalada Central wards were selected. For Kuje Rubochi and Kuje wards were selected; For Kwali, Yangoji andkwali wards were selected. For Abuja Municipal Area Council Karu and Nyanya wards were selected respectively.

Method of Data Analysis

Data analyses form the bedrock of any scientific enquiry or social research. In this study, the data collected will be analyzed by using both quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis. The technique entails a careful analysis of data collected to provide insight into the research problems and objectives. Simple descriptive statistical method such as percentage frequency and tables will be utilized to summarize information on all issues and make it easier for discussion. Furthermore, where the data do not require tabulations, findings are discussed in the form of a descriptive essay.

Similarly, the FGD Session conducted will be triangulated in descriptive form also and respondent’s views will be highlighted as in how many people reacted to the question asked in terms of few, majority and most.

Study Findings

Table 1: Which of these sequences/manners of migration applies to respondents?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Urban to urban to Abuja	6	1.0
Rural to urban to Abuja	68	10.8
Urban to Abuja	62	9.8
Rural to rural to Abuja	172	27.9
Urban to rural to Abuja	128	20.3
Rural to Abuja	190	30.1
Total	630	100.0

Source: Field Study, 2025

Table 1 Nearly one-quarter of those who migrated from an urban origin were first time migrants moving from rural areas to rural areas. The rest of them moved in stages: from one urban area to another and then to Abuja, and from

an initial rural origin to an urban area and subsequently to Abuja. About 30.1% belong to the former, 27.9% and 20.3 to the later.

This corresponds with a participant’s response from the FGD session;

“..... By the time I went to live in the rural area that was the best I could get at that time. Looking at where I was then, that rural area was even like an abroad (urban area) for me. I only desired a change, and the rural area was the only available change that I could get’’. (FGD 4/38 year old/rural migrant/August, 2025)

Similarly, other participants say:

“....the village [rural area] I migrated to before coming to Abuja was much better than my own village where I was born and bred. You know tarred road passed through there [the village she migrated to before coming to Abuja] and that gave the village an advantage over Adogo [her own village]. Trading activities are more there than my village because of the tarred road. Traveller’s always stop to buy things, so whatever you buy from bush [interior villages] will sell and I made much money from selling along the tarred road’’. (FGD 1/Res 4/ Rural migrant/ August, 2025)

With the nature and patterns of the respondent’s migration, it shows that migration takes place in phases most times before getting to place of destination.

Table 2: What respondents were doing before coming to Abuja

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Business/trading	101	16
Hair dressing	124	19.7
Fashion design/Tailoring	118	18.7
Farming/gardening	21	3.3
Bead making	24	3.8
Event planning	23	3.7
Others	219	34.8
Total	630	100.0

Source: Field Study, 2025

Table 2 shows employment status among Ebira women even before migrating to Abuja, with 19.7% of them in to Hair dressing and 18.7% in to Tailoring fashion and tailoring activities. The 34.8% response are civil servants who are gainfully employed before migrating to Abuja. This data suggest why ebira female are predominant among those who make hair or do tailoring activities withing the FCT.

From the FGD, a participant says Trading along the tarred roads in some rural areas provides opportunities that attract migrants to such areas. Roads such as Okene-Lokoja high-way, Ihima-Total express-way and Osara-lokoja road among others attract migration to a village along the road. A participant who migrated to a village along the Okene—lokoja high-way recounted her experience trading along the road:

“My first trading experience was along the high-way in Nagazi-Uvete [a village along the Okene –lokoja high-way]. I went to live in that village because of the business. We buy goods from the villagers and sell along the road. People always stop to buy. You know some specific food stuffs are sold at specific points along the high-way for passer-by. I used to sell Bread along the road and I made lot of money from that before I came to Abuja.” (FGD 2/Res3 /29 year old/ rural migrant/August 2025)

Table 3: What was your marital status before you came to Abuja?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Single	205	32.5
Married	310	49.2
Separated	92	14.6
Divorce	10	1.6
Widowed	8	1.3
Others	5	0.8
Total	630	100.0

Source: Field Study, 2025

Table 3 shows that 32.5% of the respondents said they were single women before migrating to Abuja hoping to meet their life partners there; 49.2% were already married while 14.6%, had been separated, 1.6% are divorced and 1.3% are widow, with 0.8% choose others which the researcher beliefs are cohabiting.

Getting married was one of the non-economic factors motivating female migration to Abuja. Though most of them did not have the courage to say it directly, when a participant in one of the FGDs mentioned it, other participants laughed in agreement. Most of the participants said this indirectly or in coded words.

“For me, coming to Abuja was to search for the person that makes me complete [life partner]. You know, a woman is not complete until she is a wife. This was my main reason of coming. Thank God, I now have a fiancé”. (FGD 3. Res 2 32 year old urban migrant. August, 2025)

In addition, a participant said.....

“You see, this issue she raised is the main issue, but you know that many of us are shy to say it. Coming to a big city like this, there is the belief that you will see men who are ready to settle down; perhaps, one might catch their attention”. (FGD 3. Res 3 31 year old urban migrant. August, 2025).

Similarly, another participant said....

“Marriage is something that is between you and God; and it is every woman’s desire to get married. It is God who brings the right person, but you still have something to do on your own part by making effort to be where people who are ready for marriage can see you. You know Abuja has many men who are wealthy and ready, so coming here was to see if God will link me up to the right person”. (FGD4. Res. 4, 37 year old rural migrant. August, 2025)

The hope of getting married is a common motivating factor for migration among women in their late twenties and early thirties who were not in any intimate relationship before migration. Participants in the FGDs extensively discussed the hope of getting married as a motivating factor for migrating to Abuja with shyness.

Most of them laughed as they discussed it. This shows that most single women who migrated to Abuja hoped to meet their life partner there; and indeed most of the participants know women who have found their husbands in Abuja. This was motivated by the excruciating pains single women who are in their thirties are likely to experience at their place of origin. This is captured by these submissions:

“You may not know what it means for a woman to be in her thirties, neither married nor in an intimate relationship. It is a frustrating experience. She could do anything to escape single hood which coming to Abuja could be one. Laugh laugh.....”. (FGD2, res. 7, 41 year old rural migrant. March, 2025)

This response shows that migration sometimes may not be for economic purpose only as earlier discussed in the empirical review, there are non-economic reasons for migration which is just pointed out.

Similarly, other participants say:

“I was in that situation. It is truly a terrible situation. Before I came to Abuja, I was thirty-one years. I was an object of ridicule. In my village most of the girls are illiterate and they marry very early. So, it

was very strange to see you –a graduate still in your father’s house while your mates are married with children”.

Table 4: What is your marital status at present?

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Single	69	11
Married	397	63
Separated	118	18.7
Divorce	21	3.3
Widowed	14	2.2
Others	11	1.8
Total	630	100.0

Source: Field Study, 2025.

Table 4 shows that 11% of the respondents are still single, while most are now married after migrating to Abuja. 18.7% are separated as against 14.6% before migration while 3.3% are now divorced as against 1.2%. before migration. Similarly, 2.2% are now widow as against 1.3% widow before migration. This varied respondent’s current marital status suggests the impact migration can bring to a migrant’s life circle. One of the participant’s says this during the FGD session:

“.....People made jest of me. Some will even tell you to your face: “Inya [my dear] does it mean that these men are not admiring you or what, or are there any problems?” They look at you as if something is wrong with you if you are not married. Thank God, today I am happily married”. (FGD 4. Res. 5 40 year old urban migrant. August, 2025)

Apart from the hope of getting married, another non-economic factor that motivated migration is the desire to avoid the pressure of getting married. The pressure of getting married could be very disturbing for women who are in their thirties and do not have a fiancé. This pressure comes in different subtle ways; some come from others are not; but their attitudes speak volumes. An interviewee narrated how her parents and siblings, though not vocal, created enormous pressure on her by their attitude:

parents, peers, villagers and relatives. For some, pressure from parents was more devastating; while others were pressured more by their peers, their relatives, and the villagers. Some parents, out of their desire for their daughters to get married, created pressure on them without knowing it. A participant narrated how her mother used to come to her room very early in the morning to pray with her. The prayer point was mainly about finding a partner that would love and cherish her.

“Every Monday morning before my mother leaves for her place of work, she will come to my room and say; Oyiza wake up let us pray”. The prayer point was usually asking God to make her only daughter joyful by giving her own man. Every Friday, when she comes back, she would ask me: “Inya [my dear] how far”?”

This also shows the level of the desire for a woman to get settled which can influence migration especially when the victim has faced so much pressure from the family.

Conclusion/Recommendations

The study has provided empirical results on the patterns, the underlying causes as well as the attendant consequences of female migration among the Ebira of North central to Abuja. Female Ebira migrants in Abuja mostly migrated from the rural areas; and many of them used different sequence of migration before they got to Abuja. Some migrated from a rural area to an urban area before coming to Abuja; others migrated from an urban area to another urban area before coming to Abuja; while others migrated to Abuja straight from rural area or urban area.. This finding is in line with earlier studies that have shown that rural-urban migration is the most dominant type of internal migration.

This study shows that economic as well as non-economic factors motivated migration to Abuja. While the combination of Giddens Structuration theory and Harris-Todaro theory of migration have shown that both individual as well as structural factors motivate female migration; and the motivating factor is largely economic. As a result of the economic and non-economic factors, most of the migrants migrated independently to Abuja to fulfil their economic and non-economic aspirations and desires. This study corroborates many other studies which recognize that both economic and non-economic factors motivate migration. The motivating factor is the same irrespective of where the migrant is migrating from.

From the findings of the study on the effects of migration on the migrants, it is revealed that many of them have been positively affected by migration as they have experienced changes in many areas of their life such as education, income, and occupation. Many have been empowered and as a result enjoy a new found respect in their families, friends, and communities and among peers. This no doubt shows that migration contributes in no small measure to social mobility of women. This conclusion is the same with the study by Regassa and Yusufe (2009) who concluded that migration has been known to contribute immensely to social mobility of women and socioeconomic development.

On the basis of the above findings and conclusion the following recommendations were made:

- i. Governments should establish more enabling environments in Abuja to enable migrant women realize their economic aspirations at place of destination.

- ii. National migration policy on migration should take into consideration the problems faced by women in internal migration in a patriarchal society like ours such as discrimination, violence and abuse.
- iii. Governments should through the National Bank of Industries and other specialized banks give migrant women credit facilities at very low interest rates with little or no bottlenecks in accessing it. This will help reduce the problems being faced by migrant women.
- iv. Skill acquisition training's should be organized especially for rural-urban migrants to enable them acquire the needed skills to function in urban areas. This will no doubt reduce the problems faced by migrants in general and rural-urban migrants in particular.

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